

**Testimony of Vance E. Hitch
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Before the
House Committee on Government Reform
Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy,
Intergovernmental Relations, and the Census
July 21, 2004**

Chairman Putnam, Ranking Member Clay, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the responsibilities and challenges that I face as Chief Information Officer (CIO) at the Department of Justice.

The mission of the Department is broad and formidable ranging from preventing terrorism and promoting the nation's security to ensuring the fair and efficient operation of the federal justice system. As CIO, I lead the Department in the use of technology and expanded information sharing toward these goals.

This afternoon I would like to provide you my perspective on the role of the CIO in leading a large federal agency, managing the delivery of IT services, and facilitating changes that may be needed for more effective and efficient service delivery. Specifically, I will address the following important questions.

What responsibilities of a federal CIO are most critical to the success of their organization?

At the most basic level, a CIO must create a well-functioning information technology (IT) organization that is effective in delivering centralized IT products and services and in providing departmental guidance to component IT programs. But perhaps even more important, especially in a decentralized organization, is a CIO's responsibility to lead their organization toward a common vision of how IT can and will support mission accomplishment.

Strategic planning is an important responsibility that enables a CIO to develop the IT vision and communicate the strategic initiatives that will be put in place to realize that vision. It informs budget decisions. Most importantly, it provides a framework for communicating the key projects for realizing the CIO's vision and programs.

At the Department of Justice, my job has been to unite a previously decentralized IT management approach and create a CIO organization

designed to support the post 9/11 counterterrorism mission of the Department without any loss of IT support to other departmental programs. Law enforcement information sharing has proven an effective catalyst to pull together related programs across the Department.

I view CIO responsibilities for implementing enterprise architecture, investment management, information management, and human capital planning processes as core IT program tools to accomplish a needed transformation in IT culture and capabilities. Applying these processes to law enforcement information sharing has crystallized broadly applicable issues of how we work together across the department – and where we must make changes and improve.

What is the most useful reporting structure for a CIO within the agency to achieve these responsibilities?

I report directly to the Attorney General on strategic IT issues and to the Assistant Attorney General for Administration on operational management issues. This arrangement works well at the Department of Justice.

This reporting relationship affords me the authority to make certain departmental IT decisions on behalf of the Attorney General. In addition, this organizational positioning allows me to be most effective in providing departmental oversight to component programs. At the same time, I have an organizational relationship with the DOJ Controller through my reporting relationship to the Assistant Attorney General for Administration.

I believe that the CIO must have a reporting relationship to the head of the agency to be effective in carrying out the broad range of legislative responsibilities. Technology is a mission “enabler”. Without senior-level organizational placement, there can be no guarantee that an open and active IT perspective is brought to important departmental program and budget decisions.

Is there a specific duration of time that a CIO must remain in their position to be effective?

I came to the role of CIO at the Department of Justice approximately two years ago from outside the federal service. Based on my experience, I believe that it takes three to four years for a CIO to implement IT initiatives that have a lasting impact on agency programs.

First, an effective CIO must establish and maintain a network of relationships internally, with external organizations, and with governmental

oversight bodies to carry out the broad scope of CIO legislative responsibilities effectively. For a new CIO, it can take a year, or more, to establish such a network of resources.

It then takes an additional year for a new CIO to complete a full planning and budget cycle and reflect their strategic vision in the IT capital plan that goes forward for funding. In other words, a new CIO must be in the position at least two years to have an impact on the allocation of budget resources to IT plans and requirements.

It is not until year three or four that the CIO begins to see the benefits of the strategic IT initiatives that have been developed, funded, and implemented across the organization. At this point, the culture changes and new IT capabilities in the CIO organization and across the Department should be in place to sustain the IT initiatives for lasting impact.

What characteristics and qualifications should a CIO possess?

Many diverse skills are necessary to do the job of CIO. There is, however, no single educational background, experience, or training that uniquely prepares someone to do this difficult job well. The size and complexity of a particular agency's IT program will usually determine the specific characteristics and qualifications that are likely to lead to a successful tenure as CIO.

However, there are certain core attributes that all successful CIO's share. The first is an understanding of the missions and business processes of the agency. Without this insight, it will be difficult to plan and build systems that are responsive to program needs. And, of course, the CIO must have a solid understanding of projects, systems, and technologies. Agency leadership and staff look to the CIO to provide IT oversight and guidance while the Office of Management and Budget, the General Accountability Office, and Congress hold the CIO accountable for results.

Another core attribute of successful CIOs is strong planning and management skills to assure that the IT program is implemented as planned with appropriate human capital resources. Leadership and team building are important for CIOs who often depend on limited resources in a large IT organization. Additionally, the CIO must have strong communication skills to reach out to people of various backgrounds across an agency and persuade them to support the IT vision with participation in specific projects. Finally, the CIO must be persistent – changing culture and organizations is a multi-year process.

What are the major challenges that CIOs face?

CIOs face many difficult challenges. I believe that culture change, changing the way people operate, is the hardest challenge facing CIOs in the federal government today. Closing the ongoing gap between agency culture and the rapid rate of technological change requires CIO commitment and endurance. Yet, no agency can afford to delay such changes as programs increasingly depend on IT for mission accomplishment.

Technology has an important role providing a technical infrastructure that supplies desktops, networks, databases, application systems, wireless devices, and more. The challenge that faces CIO's today is to shift the orientation away from IT as solely a "back office" function to IT as an mission critical organization.

CIOs must create a strong, capable organization with the right leadership and management team in place to effectively carry out the diverse range of responsibilities given to the CIO. From a recruiting perspective, such people are sought after, and they are a scarce resource. One of the hardest challenges is recruiting and developing IT project managers. No CIO can succeed without trained and experienced project managers to carry out the IT vision.

The last, but not least important, challenge that I will address is the CIO's difficult and ongoing job of assuring the security of the Department's information. IT security has always been important at the Department of Justice. But today, as we continue to open our systems in support of information sharing and e-government initiatives, CIO's must collaboratively address cybersecurity issues, as well as ensure that security keeps pace with the needs and expectations of the programs we support.

Mr. Chairman, that completes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to attempt to answer any questions that you may have at this time.